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ART. IV.—*Johannes Wit, genannt von Dörning. Fragmente aus meinem Leben und meiner Zeit. Aufenthalt in den Gefängnissen zu Chamberry, Turin, und Mailand, nebst meinen Flucht aus der Citadelle letzteren Ortes.*

John Wit, alias Von Dörning. Fragments of my Life and Time. Residence in the Prisons of Chamberry, Turin, and Milan, with my Escape from the Fortress of the latter City. Brunswick. 1827.

THIS curious work has attracted considerable notice in Germany. It is the autobiography of a young man named *Wit* (which auspicious cognomen he soon, and with great propriety abandoned), who first enlisted in the wild projects of revolution, conceived by some ill-advised students in the German Universities; then became implicated with the secret societies of Piedmont and Naples; and after having encountered a world of trouble from the police, in several countries, has now set himself to work within the walls of a Danish dungeon, as a sort of literary state's evidence against his former associates.

Could we place any faith in the author, the book would be valuable. As it is, no one thing, in itself improbable, is entitled to be believed because he asserts it. But, inasmuch as many things in it tally well with what is known to be true, and the author is known to have run, in general, the course which he has described, there is no objection to our admitting as probable his statements on many points, where there is no visible temptation to falsehood. In this respect, his details relative to the revolution in Piedmont are not undeserving of attention.

There is something pathetic in the account he gives us of the circumstances under which his memoirs are composed. He has written them, he says, 'in a dungeon, shut up behind a three-fold range of grated and bolted doors, with a sentinel at the nearest entrance.' 'The thick iron bars before my windows,' he adds, 'are not over cheerful; the storm which almost constantly howls round my prison, is not the sweetest music; and the residence in a solitary fortress, built out into the raging sea, procures no relief to a wasted frame, and no kind alleviation to the suffering mind.' Deprived of all his papers, he could only draw his details from his memory, 'and nothing else,' says he, 'has remained faithful to me.' 'Some important facts,' he adds, 'may be misstated, and some names may be misspelled.'

He studied at the University of Jena, at an epoch when the revolutionary excitement among the Germans was at its highest pitch. At the age of eighteen, he was, according to his own confession, the most exalted of the exalted. After having formed some political connexions abroad, he departed for Paris, in 1818, with a view to the formation of a union between the German revolutionists and those of France. To try the progress which the revolutionary spirit had made in Germany, a short poetical composition, of an obnoxious character, was published and widely circulated. The author of it was arrested in 1819, by order of the Prussian government. But believing, as he says, that the services of this gentleman were necessary to the regeneration of Germany, Wit announced *himself*, in the most solemn manner, as the author of the offensive production, and narrowly escaped arrest. In the autumn of 1819, he repaired to England, where he exchanged his own name, Wit, for that of his step-father, Döring. He employed his time in London in writing libellous and scandalous articles on the German princes, and thus, he says, acquired much notoriety. 'I thought myself a great man.' That our hero thought himself a great man, is very probable; about the notoriety, we are pestered with doubts. From London he returned to Paris. Here he met in Count de Serres, an intimate friend of his family, and Baron Eckstein, who was then inspector-general in the police department, was his maternal uncle.

Having been almost an eyewitness of the murder of the Duke of Berry, his better feelings were for a moment re-awakened. Count de Serres endeavored, by flattering his vanity, to counteract the influence, which the leaders of the revolutionary party exercised upon the young adventurer. He gives no facts of any importance during his residence in Paris, and we give no credit to his general, vague accounts of his connexions with all parties, and his project of forming a party of his own.

In the summer of 1820, he informs us that he defeated a project to murder the king of France. In July, 1821, an intimate associate of the Italian revolutionists, a Dr Joachim de' Prati, declared to him in Switzerland, that they had resolved to bring about the revolution by murder, or (as they expressed it) by *cold iron*; whereupon our hero broke off all connexion with them. His associates resolved to punish him for this de-

sertion ; and hints are dropped that his death was decreed. Shortly afterwards he was arrested by the government of Piedmont. The incidents of his first detention, until his escape from the citadel of Milan, are the subject of the present book. He anticipates, however, a portion of the contents of another volume, by stating that, after having wandered for nearly a year through Switzerland and Germany, under different disguises, and names, with a price set upon his head, he was at length arrested, at Bayreuth, in February, 1824. The judge who examined his cause, Baron de Welden, won his confidence. The Prussian government had, by that time, discovered the manoeuvres of a secret association (*geheime Bund*). The author volunteered to declare all he knew about this matter. A counsellor was despatched by the Prussian government to Bayreuth to examine him ; and this gentleman, like the former, inspired him with the greatest confidence and affection. He boasts of having communicated to the Prussian government the true origin of the above mentioned association, and his own secret movements at Paris. No accusation had been brought against him. His declarations were perfectly spontaneous. He could have retracted the one, in consequence of which he had been arrested, namely, that he was the author of the revolutionary poem abovementioned ; but instead of telling this truth, he thought fit to criminate himself, and in consequence is enjoying the leisure of a dungeon.*

From Bayreuth he was sent to Berlin, where he arrived with many prejudices against the Prussian government ; but, during his long detention, he observes that he had abundant reasons to change his opinion. The two judicial personages who examined him won his esteem and friendship. He had spoken very disrespectfully of one of them, a Mr de Kamptz, in English newspapers ; this gentleman did, nevertheless, everything that depended on him to alleviate his sufferings. He calls upon the testimony of all those who have been under prosecution in Prussia to state, ‘ whether it is possible to proceed with more rectitude, mildness, and benevolence, than this much calumniated gentleman.’ He declared all he knew of the plans of his ancient associates, for, he observes, he saw the time was come to tell the whole truth. He saved thus many innocent persons. Against the blame which might be thrown upon him for this

* The memoirs are dated February, 1827, at Fredericssort, a Danish fortress in South Jutland, three leagues north of Kiel.

conduct, he alleges his conviction, 'that the state must, like the church, abandon speculative truth ; and that natural rights are as insufficient for the bulk of mankind, as natural religion.' He has, moreover, as he says, acquired the conviction that the several governments of Germany aim at the good of their subjects, and earnestly wish to reëstablish order and tranquillity by mildness. The reader perceives, by this specimen, that the Danish jailors understand the regimen that suits gentlemen like Mr Wit ; from 'a patriot of distinguished note,' they have tamed him down to a very edifying loyalty.

Entering now into the details of his revolutionary course, he begins with his adventures in Switzerland. He had been ordered by the Swiss authorities to leave the city of Geneva, and the canton of that name ; but instead of obeying that injunction, he went secretly to Mornex, a village on the little Saleve, to wait for an opportunity to begin his operations at Rome and at Naples. While residing here, he frequently repaired to Geneva in the night.

Soon after the arrival of the Austrian troops at Naples, the *Alta Vendita*, or Supreme Directory of the Carbonari, dissolved itself for the time. This was done less from fear of discovery, than from the conviction that it had lost, for the present, its influence over the other *Vendite* and *Baracche* (so they styled their local associations), which were closely observed by the authorities. The members of the three first degrees were, moreover, so numerous, that it was indispensable to adopt a thorough reform.

In the summer of 1821, eleven of the principal leaders assembled at Capua, and resolved to depute two of their farthest initiated 'Cousins' (*Cugini*), to Paris, on purpose to confer with the chiefs of the *Great Firmament*, on the propriety of transferring to that capital the direction of the entire concern of the Carbonari ; that being the place where they would find the best means of forming connexions with every part of Europe, of procuring the most important coöperators, and the amplest pecuniary resources. This *Great Firmament*, or Directory of the secret society of France, as the author asserts, originated in two other secret fraternities, the *Adelfia* and *Filadelfia*, which jointly or severally, were connected with General Mallet, who endeavored to overthrow Bonaparte, while he was himself in prison ; a project which conducted him to the guillotine, or to some other such end.

The task of uniting the *Great Firmament* with the *Alta Vendita*, was committed to two deputies, the Sicilian Duke Garutula, and Carlo Chericone, Klerkon (?), son of the Neapolitan Duke of Fra-Marino, chamberlain, or major-domo of the king. This latter individual sought our author, and delivered him a letter from an old friend of his, a Pole, who had resided for some time at Naples, as a secret emissary of the malcontents of his country, and had proposed to the Neapolitan Parliament, to organize a legion of his countrymen, which should muster four thousand men. Klerkon was the bearer to Wit of a commission of Inspector-General of Carbonari in Germany and Switzerland; but he declined accepting it, not from love or respect for the existing governments, but because he was persuaded that the Italians were so corrupt, that a revolution would but bring upon them greater miseries than already weighed upon them. Upon being told, however, that the commission which he declined would be tendered to the lawyer Joachim de' Prati, he accepted it; for he knew the sanguinary disposition of this man, how strong was his hatred of all existing institutions, and how easily he could be led into every kind of crime. But whilst he thus sacrificed himself, he says, for the public weal, he took care to disclose his motives and his secret intentions to a highly elevated personage. Whoever this may be, the author owns that instead of encouraging him to continue in the connexions into which he had recently entered, he did everything in his power to reconcile him with his 'father-land,' and to persuade him to adopt a course of life more conformable to his personal interest, and to the welfare of society. But he thought it too late for him to retire from the dangers into which he had plunged, lest his courage might be questioned. He speaks here in a mysterious jargon, well adapted to his revolutionary career, of a Prince, who accepted the highest degrees of the secret association, and who succeeded, by these means, to neutralize the manœuvres of his compeers. Who this new *Monsieur Egalité* may be, we are not informed. The author speaks of him in the following terms; and if there is any truth in what he says, of which we have strong doubts, the *high personage* has great cause to be flattered with the figure he is made to cut.

'For the step which I took, I have the example of a most respected Prince, known and honored by a large part of my readers in a still more definite character. To him, unquestionably the most

deeply initiated among the initiated, was committed the inspector-generalship and propagation of the Illuminati-Association, throughout the North of Europe. He received from the hands of Knigge (?) the documents (*cahiers*) of the three highest orders (fortunately existing only on paper), and thereby learned the scandalous object of the Association. He foresaw the evil which would be occasioned, should he separate himself from it in open disgust, and some other, imbued with the full spirit of the order of the Priests and Epoptæ, undertake the direction. On this account he constrained himself to accept the office abovementioned; and gave so skilful a turn to affairs, and so neutralized the poison of the Association, that it disappeared in the North without effect, where, but for this, it would have found but too ready a reception, and but too many supporters.'

The author throws, after all, little light upon the origin of the Carbonari. According to him, the catechism published of that society, by a Mr St Edme, is spurious; and few of the initiated themselves know of how many degrees their confraternity was composed, who were their brethren, and where the *Alta Vendita*, the highest lodge, resided. The Carbonari pretend to a very remote origin. It would seem that a society, called the *Charbonniers*, existed in Franche-Comté; and the Italian Carbonari borrowed from them the title of *good cousins*, and the patron St Theobald; but this, adds our author, is their only similarity. The principal *Vendita* was opened at Capua, in 1809, and their instructions and journals were in the English language. The preference given to this tongue is ascribed by the author to the circumstance, that the Republican party of Italy was intimately connected with the Royalists of Sicily; and that the latter were in close connexion with the British minister, who merely wished to make use of them against their common adversary, the then Emperor of France. Lord Bentinck, says the author, stood very high in the ranks of the order; and while entrusted with a command in the Mediterranean, performed all the duties of *bon cousin* in the most conscientious manner.

In the lower degrees of the Carbonari, morality, Christianity, and even the Church, were the ends for which the initiated swore to sacrifice everything; and the independence and unity of Italy were considered as merely means of extending virtue and piety. But on being admitted to the fourth degree, a new scene opened. The *Apostoli*, as they were called, were obliged to promise to destroy all monarchies, and especially

those of the Bourbon dynasty. But the whole of the secret was revealed to the initiated in the seventh and last degree. The great end was then disclosed, and it was no other than that of the *Illuminati*. The initiated swore destruction to every positive religion, and to every established form of government. Unlimited despotism and democracy were alike under the ban. All means were declared allowable for the execution of these plans, even murder and perjury. The author was admitted to this unhallowed secret, and was received as *Princeps summus Patriarchus*, but without being obliged to bind himself by the ordinary oath. He owed this exemption to the circumstance that he received that high degree, not in a full meeting of the society, but by *communication*, or by full powers especially conferred, to that effect, upon one or more members of the secret society. Here we shrewdly suspect honest Wit of fibbing. He might as well own that he took the oath. If breaking such an oath made him guilty of perjury, we do not know that any body would think the worse of him for that.

By way of set-off for betraying these secrets, our hero (with whom it is *Tros Rutulusve*) denounces another society, which, according to him, is exerting itself to restore everything to the situation, in which it was previous to the French revolution. The *Società della Santa Fede*, as he calls them, are a set of ecclesiastics, who labor to reëstablish the influence of the clergy in Italy. Their president, at one time, was the late Pope. They bear several names, at the present time, such as *Consistoriali*, *Crocesegnati*, *Crociferi*, *Società dell' Anello*, and *dei Bruti*. France favors their designs, because of the identity of their views with the Jesuits, and because she hopes to weaken, by their means, the ascendancy of the Austrians in Italy. In regard to territorial changes, the Duke of Modena, though so nearly related to the Imperial dynasty, was to obtain Piedmont, and the whole of Upper Italy. Tuscany was to be the lot of the Pope, and a portion of the Ecclesiastical Territory was assigned to Naples.

These *Santa-Fedists* hated Austria, adds he, because her government is too wise to confer much power on the clergy, and because she is supposed to wait anxiously for the first opportunity of placing a prince of the Imperial dynasty upon the throne of St Peter. The Piedmontese members of that party hate Austria, because she counteracts their exaggerated

principles, and curbs their vindictive disposition. The author applauds the conduct of the Austrians at that critical epoch. The most perfect discipline reigned among their troops; wherever they were stationed, as for instance at Alexandria, the political reaction was unaccompanied with cruelties, and it was sufficient to be enlisted in the imperial service, to escape all prosecution. We cannot but ask the question, how Wit became possessed of the confidence of this party.

After a long digression, on the state of parties in Piedmont, the author enters into further details respecting his personal relations with the Italian revolutionists; and here the story of this volume regularly begins, if we understand it. Klerkon induced the Prince Antrodocco to trust him with an unimportant, though secret, commission into Lombardy and Switzerland, under the name of Zante. He, and the author, waited for two other associates, who were to join them at Geneva, the Duke Garutula, who had adopted the name of Lord Morby, and Colonel Picolletis, both then residing at London. But whilst Wit awaited their arrival, a police officer of Geneva, named Giron, informed the commander of the *gens-d'armes* at St Julien, of his residence at that place, of his previous arrest at Turin, and of his suspicious character. On the twentieth of September, 1821, Wit, who was on that day confined by illness to his room, was informed, that some persons wished to speak to him; and instantly several soldiers entered the room, and holding their blunderbusses to his head, politely requested him not to move, as he was a prisoner. They were Piedmontese *gens d'armes* or *carabiniers*, as they were called; and the first thing they did, was to seize all the papers that were lying upon a table. Wit was very uneasy, on account of a letter involving the life of a friend, which he had received on the previous day. To save it from the hands of the *gens d'armes* was therefore his first thought, and the mode in which he accomplished it would have done credit to a graduate of the state's prison. Quietly lying in his bed, he draws on his stockings and rubs the bottom of them with a tallow candle, which stood by his bed-side. This done, he leaps from the bed, unclad as he was, and, under the pretence of assisting in collecting and putting up his papers, upsets the table. The papers flew in every direction; and he contrived to set his foot, with its adhesive preparation, on the all-important document.

He then put on his slippers, and soon succeeded, unobserved, in destroying the paper.

From Mornex he was conducted to Bonneville, in the valley of Chamouni, with few or no clothes, and no money. His feet soon became sore and blistered, from his fatiguing journey; and seized with a violent fever, he considered himself happy in reaching his place of destination for the night on the bare back of an unbridled ass.

The commanding officer at Bonneville, Count Avogadro, allowed the prisoner to take up his abode in an inn. Here he sold his watch, which had cost him a hundred dollars, for the tenth part of that sum. On the next morning he set out for Annecy, and here our dainty *Princeps summus Patriarchus* complains, that he did not, like Jean Jacques, find a Madame de Warens, to take pity on him! Instead of this, he says, he was pelted by the boys in the streets, some of whom held grass to his ass's mouth, to make him stand still, while their confederate rogues took aim at poor Wit.

Chevalier Benedetto, the commander of the *gens-d'armes* in the province of Carouge, a gentleman stricken in years, who appears to have shared the sentiments of the Bey of Tunis on the subject of clubs, caused our hero to be instantly conveyed to prison, without previous parley. The *gens d'armes* made their sport of him, and one among them, after having bound him with a rope, drove him into a subterranean prison. 'Am I to go under ground?' asked the discouraged Wit. *Coraggio, carino*, 'Courage, my friend,' returned the *carabinier*, with a grin, which might have rendered superfluous the prisoner's proficiency in the Italian language; *l'alzaranno ben presto; da quì non si sorte, che per andare alla galletta*, 'courage, my friend, you will soon be up; the only way out hence is to the gallows.'

This dungeon was twelve feet square, and so low that the prisoner, though a small man, could not stand upright. It was lighted by means of air holes, open on a level with the street, which, when it rained, gave a free passage to the water from the streets of the town. This place had shortly before been the last abode of a criminal executed for murder; yet his straw bed was a welcome legacy to his successor. He was ever afterwards, he says, unable to remember what he did during the first night he passed in that horrible prison; whether he wept or laughed, slept or was awake. The next morning,

as he came to his senses, he beheld near him an old man and woman, who exclaimed, 'He is not dead; he lives yet.' These were the jailer and his wife; and the latter, moved with pity at the utter dejection of poor Wit, prevailed on her husband to carry him up into her room. They were both very kind to him, and obliged him to share with them their only bed. Yet they dared not procure him medical assistance, for fear of the governor. At length, on the fourth day of his detention at Annecy, he was transported in a wagon, fastened by a chain to several recaptured deserters from the galleys. All the gyves in the jailer's armory being too large for his wrists, an unchristian instrument, for which (Heaven be praised) there is no English name, the *poucettes*, was applied to his fingers, which caused him so much pain, that he excited the pity of his fellow sufferers. They were in no want of food, for the lower class of people in Italy are generally very compassionate to all convicts, except state prisoners. Wit being unluckily of the latter class, whilst his companions experienced all sort of kindness from the mob, he received only proofs of contempt and hatred.

In the military quarters, where he was detained at Aix in Savoy, he discovered the five *carabiniers*, who were placed over him, to be free-masons; and as soon as he made himself known to them, they promised to render him all the good offices compatible with their duties. From Aix, Wit was carried to Chamberry; and here again he met with a kind reception, on behalf of the *carabiniers*. A physician advised his transportation to a hospital. 'Having been brought up with tenderness, I now found myself,' exclaims he, 'in a public hospital.' This institution was under the care of a religious sisterhood. The good nuns, in spite of the misrepresentation to which they exposed themselves, gave him one of their cells; trimmed it with flowers; beguiled his sad hours with reading and conversation; and provided him with all he could wish for his meals. 'Indeed,' cries he, 'I know nothing nobler or more respectable on earth, than the grey sisters. Religion alone can lend them the strength to discharge their arduous duties; and such a religion must needs be the true one.' He corroborates this by the wonderful examples of self-devotion which these excellent females gave at Barcelona, at the time when the yellow fever raged in that city; by the offer they made to the Greek committee to tend the sick at Missolonghi; and by what

he himself had witnessed of their humanity towards the convicts in the prisons at Toulon. Their influence among these unfortunate men, he says, far exceeded that of the clergy. Convicts, on the eve of their execution, and struck with remorse, begged anxiously to be permitted to confess their sins to one of these pure and noble creatures.

He remained five weeks in the hospital. On the second of November, he was torn from the midst of the charitable sisterhood, and withdrawn from the care of a nun, who reminded him of his mother, not only by her personal qualities, but by her appearance. The good nun secretly thrust into his hand a paper containing a few pieces of gold. But this did not save him from being loaded with chains, and thrown into a small wagon, with five soldiers. The commanding sergeant soon ordered him, either to give him half of his gold, or forfeit the whole, no prisoner being permitted to have money. By submitting to this exaction, he obtained, into the bargain, permission to pass his nights on the road in an inn; and on the fifth day, he reached Turin.

Here our author, instead of limiting himself to a narrative of personal events, goes at length into the history of the latest troubles in Piedmont. This part of his work, however, we must pass over, although we do it with reluctance, as being, *if entitled to credit*, about the only valuable part of Wit's book. Being uncertain as to the degree of faith which can be placed in his details, and having undertaken to follow his personal narrative, we must omit his sketch of these revolutionary movements. We accordingly meet with him next, in the presence of the minister of police of the kingdom of Piedmont, the Chevalier Roget de Cholex, a gentleman, he says, of unquestionable integrity, wherever his political opinions are not concerned. The chevalier, with a most winning courtesy, told him that he was convinced of his innocence; but finding him arrested, he could not forbear to examine him, were it but *pro formâ*. He told him, however, that the papers which had been seized upon him, proved that he had been acquainted with the criminal designs of some of the contrivers of the insurrection, namely, Count Santa Rosa, and Morozzo, and left no doubt respecting his intercourse with the Duke de Dalberg, and the Spanish envoy Bardaxi. A full confession of all that he knew, the minister said, would procure him immediately his liberty. *Monseigneur*, replied the prisoner, *ce n'est pas à mes révélations, mais à mon inno-*

cence, que je devrai ma mise en liberté.—J'avouerai d'ailleurs à Votre Excellence, que j'ignore absolument tout ce qui pourrait avoir rapport aux vues supposées des exilés Piémontais.' The minister frowned at him for a moment, and ringing the bell, said to him ; ' It seems, sir, that your memory is rather faithless. You will be conveyed into a place where you will have sufficient leisure to reflect upon what you know, or are ignorant of.' Having said this, he gave him in charge to a sentinel, who accompanied him to his prison. But before he reached it, he was marched through the town, loaded with chains, where not long before he had appeared in a very different garb, and under different auspices. A countess of his acquaintance passed close by him, leaning upon the arm of a young officer, with whom also he was acquainted. His first impulse led him to address them ; but the lady had the barbarity to turn her head aside, her knight laughed in his face, and his own companion gave him a blow, altogether a pretty severe visitation for a civil word to an old acquaintance. He reached, at length, his limbo.

His jailer was a tall, gaunt fellow, of forty, in whose perpetual grin, malice and treachery were ill concealed ; his wife ten years older than he, uncouth and enormous in size, of red, bloated aspect, the personification of female coarseness and abandonment, surrounded by an interesting troop of children, more malicious than herself, with squinting eyes and carrotty hair. The prompt discernment, with which our hero penetrates the characters of these engaging persons, demands our admiration.

The prisoner was commanded to strip off his clothes, to show whether money or weapons were concealed about his person. For this purpose our modest hero demanded the retirement of another room, a proposal which was received with a fiendish yell of laughter ; and as he persisted in his views of decorum, his clothes were immediately torn from his back by main force. After this preparatory display of prison hospitality during nearly an hour, and after having followed the jailer through all the windings of the prison, which had formerly been a Jesuit's convent, he found himself, at length, in his cell, which was better than the one he had occupied in the prison at Annecy. Wit was at first in doubt whether he was to be the sole inmate of the cell. This doubt was presently solved ; for Bagnasco, the jailer, politely applying his foot to something before them on the ground, cried out with the help of an oath ; *Che*

s'alza, calzolajo maledetto, 'Get up, you — cobbler!' Thereupon a colossal figure sprang up, and in a tone equally mild and amiable replied, *Figlio d' una vacca*, can't you let people take their rest?' Signor Bagnasco, without heeding the reply, turned to his new inmate with the few and emphatic words; *Lo resta qui*, 'Here you remain.'

Here then, within the safe enclosure of an oaken door, studded with iron, and armed with double bolts, our hero was left to his meditations. Ere long, his amiable chum, whom he had heard and felt, but could not see, approached him with the friendly offer of half his bed, and made himself known to Wit as a masonic brother.

Peculiar care was taken, in this prison, to deprive the captives of all means of attempting their own lives, or that of the jailer, or any of his assistants. This was carried so far, that they were deprived of all furniture, and had no fire. The windows, instead of glass, were of linen; and even the metal buttons of the prisoners' garments were cut off, and a liberal allowance of pack-thread furnished as a substitute. During the night, the jailer visited the prisoners, every two hours, followed by two attendants. At each of these visits, they struck with heavy iron staves upon the floor, and against the grates, to judge, by the sound, if any of the bars were loosened or cut.

Our young German on the following morning was conveyed, in a carriage, to the police office, under the guard of three soldiers. The papers, which had been seized upon him, were already unsealed. He complains of the loss of several, that might have clearly established his innocence; but which, notwithstanding his repeated solicitation, he never was able to recover. His examination lasted three hours, and he was afterwards reconducted to his prison. The little money he possessed, he was obliged to disburse for his conveyance to the police. A pitcher of bad water and a pound of bread were, for that day, his food and his drink. The distribution of the soup having taken place during his absence, he had lost his share of it. An inflammatory fever soon increased his wretchedness, and his only relief was some grapes, with which his compassionate fellow sufferer supplied him. His severe treatment is candidly ascribed by our hero, to an imprudent assault which he had made on two of the jailer's attendants. Seeing his bare neck, they hazarded the remark, that it was

fitter for the block, than for the halter ; which, considering the source from whence it came, was rather a complimentary than a reproachful remark, decapitation being far more genteel than hanging. Wit however took it amiss, and seizing them both, beat their heads together, till the blood gushed from their ears and nostrils. The victory was, as might have been expected, of short duration ; the fellows, though worsted at first, rose like Antæus from the restorative touch of the jail floor, and threw the feverish conqueror against the wall, with such violence, that he fell at their feet, and as they thought, dead. But as soon as this alarm was over, they fastened him with an iron ring and chain to the wall, and separated him from his kind companion. Wit complains that the consequences of this affray were felt by him for years, and that he was never fairly *right in the head* afterwards ; but this difficulty, we believe, ought to be dated much farther back.

The further examination of our hero was delayed by the necessity of translating his papers. As soon as this was done, he was brought before a magistrate, who visited the prison. At first, he resisted the summons ; neither threats nor blows could move him to obey. He insisted that Signor Angelo Romano, the secretary of the police, should repair to his cell ; and to the amazement of the turnkey, and his uncompromising help-mates, that officer not only came, but betrayed, by strong emotions, the pity he felt for the sufferings of the young captive ; and he instantly ordered him to be taken out of his irons, and severely reproved the jailer for his excessive severity. An expert jailer, however, was at this period a very consequential person at Turin ; and it was not without great difficulty that Signor Romano procured his removal into a larger room, which was, however, already tenanted by several state prisoners. They were all, more or less, implicated in the late political movements, and knew Wit's history. They were all under criminal trial, while he, only 'suspected of being suspicious,' as he says, was merely under the *surveillance* of the police. His companions in misfortune, about seventy in number, and all officers, were nevertheless not so much depressed in spirits as himself. They often passed their evenings, which no one of them was certain might not be the last of his earthly career, carousing, and playing at cards. Wit had recourse to a singular expedient to write to one of his friends in France, for pecuniary assistance. Having allowed the nail of the little

finger of his left hand to grow to a considerable length, he sharpened it upon a stone and with his teeth, so as to convert it into a tolerable pen, and his blood supplied the place of ink. Having, by this means, written his note, he was not less successful in finding a faithful agent, among his fellow prisoners, to forward it. A few weeks after, he received a remittance, by which he was enabled to hire a mattress, and to board with the jailer, who, from that moment, became remarkably good-natured. The penitentiary system in Piedmont, especially in regard to state criminals, was not allowed to add much to the burdens on the treasury. Happily for the prisoners of all descriptions, the *Società della Misericordia* supplied them with beds, and with daily rations of bread and rice soup; to which was added meat, twice a week. This society included many ladies of respectability, who were withal engaged in the less feminine business of reforming the state. They composed a secret female political society, under the name of the *Gardeners*. The central committee of this association sat at Bologna.

The fate of the prisoners in whose company Wit now lived, was dependent on the decisions which might be made at any moment by the tribunals, and which, once made, were carried into instant effect. One of their number, a lieutenant-colonel, Chevalier Laucris, being one day called from table, because his counsel desired to confer with him, left the company, requesting our hero to keep his place and his wine. An hour having elapsed, and no sign of Laucris, the warden was questioned as to what had become of him. He pretended at first not to know the cause of his protracted absence; but after another hour had passed, the turnkey informed the prisoners, that Laucris had received his sentence, and was already on the way to execution. At the same moment, the sound of muffled drums was heard; and the prisoners, having climbed up to their windows, saw their late companion suspended on a gibbet. All this was the work of three hours.

This, and similar examples of prompt administration, served but to harden the hearts of the other prisoners. A sullen, impatient resignation to their fate, was visible in all their actions. They gambled during whole nights. Two officers agreed to play for the chance of survivorship, the winner to inherit the other's effects. The loser contrived from that moment, to squander all he possessed.

The Piedmontese government offered to Wit a small allowance ; but he refused to accept it, having, as he says, determined, in the outset of 'his political career,' never to bind himself by the two most indissoluble bonds, by which, according to him, a man can be tied, 'by gratitude and by oath.' This self-denial required in the present case no little effort ; for the sum of eight hundred francs, which composed his whole fortune at that time, was purloined from him by his jailer, in obedience, he intimates, to the express command of a higher authority. Count de Latour du Pin, the French ambassador, had addressed a note to the Piedmontese ministry, representing Wit as a person well known to his government, and who had been near doing mischief in France. The minister of police in Geneva wrote to the same purpose. But instead of deploing these additional persecutions, our hero makes no secret of his satisfaction at having been considered so important and so dangerous by two governments, as to induce them to aggravate his sufferings.

Regard to our limits obliges us to pass over some portions of our hero's narrative, and regard to delicacy requires us to omit others. Tired at length of his sojourn within prison walls, he determined to make an experiment of the magnanimity of Count Bubna, the Austrian military governor of Lombardy and the neighboring regions, then occupied by the Austrian troops. He accordingly wrote him a letter informing him of his situation, soliciting a personal interview with him, and kindly giving him an account of the state of things in Upper Italy ; for which Count Bubna, who probably had a spy in every coffee-house in the country, and who read every letter that passed through the post-office, was no doubt much obliged to honest Wit. Some time passed and no answer reached him from the Count. He determined, as the next resource, on suicide. Starvation seemed to him, from experience, the easiest mode of getting rid of life. It was a mode to which the prison regimen afforded great facilities. 'Only begin,' says he, 'with eating and drinking less every day, and at last take no food, and live only upon water, and you may be sure to die without any suffering.' The experiment even procured him many of those pleasurable sensations described by the Opium-eater,—he saw and communed with distant and long departed friends ; but in proportion as he refused all nourishment, the minister of the police was the more diligent in sending him the most tempting

dainties. All these attentions proving without avail, the jailer had recourse to the compulsive process, the favorite method of the Turin jailers to bring gentlemen to an appetite, who are for anticipating the regular course of law. In that crisis, our hero resorted to a remedy, with which, after the example of Frederic the Great and some other heroes, he had provided himself, from the moment that he entered upon his glorious career,—a poison, which he constantly carried in his pockets, prepared in the form of sugar plums. But on the day in which he was to accomplish this great design, an answer was brought him from Count Bubna. The Count promised to see him within a few days; and upon this prospect of coming under the auspicious sway of the Austrian military police, he immediately grew better in health and spirits and appetite. His papers, however, were all seized, a measure which he ascribes to the jealousy of the Piedmontese toward the Austrians. And here we cannot but remark on the endless accumulation of what are called ‘papers.’ Seize a gentleman of Mr Wit’s vocation as often as you will, you always find him with a trunk full of papers of the most portentous import.

At length, in February, 1822, a young Italian Baron was ushered into his cell, with the recommendatory title of an agent, commissioned by the Austrian authorities to release him from his dungeon. On the following night he left his prison, without taking leave of the friends of either sex who had befriended his confinement. He was put into an easy and commodious vehicle, and escorted by four mounted *gens d’armes*. But the Italian Baron soon dismissed this guard, upon Wit’s promise not to attempt his escape. Volpini de Maestris (for this was the name of the polite Baron) did not fail to make his companion sensible of the great honor with which he was treated, in being guarded by so distinguished a personage as himself; and they proceeded, with the fairest weather imaginable, from Turin to Milan, through Vercelli, Novara, and Buffalora.

And here ends the first book of these fragments; and with it, must be drawn toward a close our account of their contents. The adventures of this unhappy young man at Milan, could any faith be placed in their detail, are more interesting than those of which we have laid a sketch before our readers. Count Bubna appears, at first, to have treated him with a blunt kind of military frankness and friendship, intending, no doubt, to draw something from him. He enjoyed great privileges and

freedom from personal restraint, by the Count's permission ; and his pages are filled with the adventures and intrigues with which his time was taken up. We never knew a personage less considerable than a Countess brought upon the stage, on such an occasion ; and accordingly, for the second time in Wit's book, we are introduced to a lady of this quality. We look upon it as mere moon-shine.

By this time, the different governments which had claims on Wit, began to move in his affairs. There was such a controversy for the honor of having him in their respective jails, as has not existed since the dispute of the seven cities about Homer. Denmark claimed him as her subject, and a Prussian diplomatic agent had made, on behalf of the court of Copenhagen, an application to the cabinet of Turin, long before Wit had himself written to Count Bubna. The Piedmontese police, on giving him up to the Count, reserved, however, the right of the Prussian ministry. Not long afterwards, the Austrian Special Commission, in consequence of a discovery of letters, written by him to Count Gonfalonieri, either of a treasonable import, or showing his connexion with the Carbonari, requested Count Bubna to send him back to the civil prison. Yet the affair remained undecided until the Congress of Verona had been for some time in session. Count de Serres, then French ambassador at Naples, the relative of Wit and the friend of his family, was soon joined to the other diplomatists at Verona. 'This gentleman,' as Wit observes, with an amusing tone of irony, 'had ceased to belong to the party of *Doc-trinaires*, and was no longer my patron.' He represented the prisoner as the more dangerous, since from his youth, and some good qualities, he could deceive the most cautious ; and confessed that he had himself been led to contribute to his criminal manœuvres. The imputation the most likely to impede his rescue, was, that he belonged to the General Directory, or *Comité Directeur*, of the revolutionary movements. Wit hints that such a junto really existed ; but his hint, and the jargon in which it is clothed, are probably intended to alarm the governments, and to increase his own importance. At the same time, the *Commissione della Porta Nuova*, at Milan, claimed him anew ; and as Count Bernstorff asked, also, his surrender to the Danish government, it was determined that he should be tried by the Commission, and afterwards embarked for Denmark, either from Genoa or Leghorn. He knew what his fate

in that case would be ; and determined, therefore, to seek his safety by a prompt flight. But, from the apprehension of implicating thereby Count Bubna, whom he always affects to represent as his benefactor, he wrote to him, then at Verona, that he should endeavor to rescue himself. The consequence was, that the commander of the fortress was directed to watch him more closely, and to abridge the liberty which he had previously enjoyed. 'This,' says he, 'was precisely what I wished. During the seven months of plenty, I had provided myself for the seven months of famine. In other words, I had now many friends in the fortress.' In this, however, he was soon disappointed. Being removed to another part of the fortress, he lost the chance of bribing the turnkey, with whom he had been long acquainted, and the sentinels, posted at his door, belonged to nations with whose language he was not acquainted. Under these disappointments, he resorted to his old resource of suicide. He attempted to cut an artery, but succeeded only in opening a vein. Having placed his arm in a basin of warm water, he waited, like Seneca, for his end ; but on the next morning he found himself, unconscious of what had passed, stretched upon a bed, with a physician by his side. Several weeks elapsed, before he was able to rise and walk.

Orders arrived, meanwhile, from Verona to mitigate his confinement ; whereupon the governor of the fortress, Baron Swinburne (an uncle of the traveller of that name), permitted him to visit him, under an escort, once every day. He spent there some time in conversation with the general, who was enchanted, it seems, to talk English. In one of these visits, he met, by assignation, the valet of the Countess. Provided with an officer's cloak, he effected his escape from the prison to the Countess' dwelling. A price of ten thousand *lire* was set upon his head, but he nevertheless spent a week with the lady, disguised in female attire. A messenger sent to Turin, to manage his escape with one of his acquaintance, returned with an unsatisfactory answer. Obligated to hasten his flight, he resorted at length to the resource of assuming the dress and manners of a smuggler, or *frustrator*, as the Italians call that class of gentry, who strongly resemble the *contrabandistas* of Spain. The neighborhood of Switzerland, from which numberless difficult passages and short cuts lead into the interior of Lombardy, to the Lago Maggiore, and to the Lakes of Como and Garda, which border on three different states,

furnishes many facilities for the smuggling trade. The Countess' *valet de chambre* had a brother who was intimately acquainted with a band of smugglers; and Wit, in the expectation of joining them, went to board with the porter of the police director, 'for so cunning a lad was he [Wit] reckoned, that he could not better escape detection than by taking the step most likely to be avoided.' He was received by the door-keeper into his miserable room, under the pretence that he was a Swiss merchant, who, in an encounter with custom-house officers, had been so unfortunate as to kill one of them, and was accordingly obliged to keep a strict *incognito*. During the short time that he found security against the police under the roof of its principal officer, he was, nevertheless, as may well be imagined, in an uneasy state of mind. The porter was constantly receiving visitors; and an old woman, who frequently called upon his wife, one evening mentioned the escape of Wit, and the price set upon his head. Sensible of his danger, he resolved to leave his retreat, and to return anew to his Countess for some days. But the prison being near the Countess' dwelling, he took refuge there, with the consent of the jailer, with whom everything had been plotted to that end, through the agency of another fair and frail confederate. After having spent five days among murderers and thieves, he removed to a private apartment in a house advantageously situated for his final escape. Here he suffered much from cold, none of his rooms being provided with a chimney. He occasionally got admittance into the apartment of his hostess, where there was a fire, which, however, the worthy mistress of the house would not let him approach. Her first husband, it seems, had committed a murder; but for want of proof had been acquitted on trial. He went home, overjoyed, to his wife, and related the agreeable news to her, by the fire-side. A couple of spies of the police were stationed at the top of the chimney, heard the tale, and within twenty-four hours the indiscreet gentleman was convicted of murder. Ever after that time, his disconsolate widow (who had taken a second husband) had a horror of fire-side conversation; and would not, says Wit, for this reason, let him approach her chimney-corner!

At length his Piedmontese friend arrived, and offered to guide him safely beyond the frontiers of Lombardy. His friend was by profession a lawyer, and in principles a worthy associate of our hero. Disguised as a priest, Wit set out on his

journey to Pavia, in a light vehicle. The greatest difficulty that remained for him was to pass the frontier. But the lawyer knew every unfrequented pass ; and after having crossed the Po, they proceeded, through bushes and moors, along the banks of that river, towards Carbonara, a village which principally thrives by smuggling. Before they reached that village, they were met by a *carabinier*, who called them to account. The lawyer stated that he was on his way to call on a client, and that the priest in his company was directing his steps to the same house, to give spiritual aid to the dying consort of the same individual. The soldier, without manifesting any suspicion, seemed, nevertheless, disposed to accompany the traveller ; upon which the lawyer thrust his hand under his vest, in search of his stiletto, and gave to his associate a signal to coöperate in the bloody deed. Wit however, like the immortal Chancellor, was a friend of moderate counsels ; and by the gift of some pictures of saints which he took from his Breviary, he won the good will of the honest soldier, whose life he thus saved. The man of the law preceded them ; and by the time they entered the cottage, the hale and healthy matron had already stretched herself upon her straw bed, pretending to be in her last extremity, and imploring the benediction of the mock minister of the church, who performed his task with so much effect, that the warrior was moved to tears, and felt himself compelled to withdraw, to avoid showing unsoldierlike emotion. After having thus escaped detection without committing murder, (for he owns frankly, that he would have slain the soldier, in case his own liberty had been in jeopardy), he determined upon making a day's halt at Carbonara, in order to meditate upon his further proceedings. In Switzerland, he could not flatter himself with being long in safety, the Helvetic government having given up several revolutionary refugees, and that country being, at that time, much visited by the *surveillans* of several royal courts. It was also too dangerous for him to return to Germany or France. Spain was then a safe retreat for men of his description, and, as he says, a country where in all likelihood there would be business for him.

In the hope of finding a passage on board of some ship sailing from Genoa or Leghorn, he despatched a circular letter to the nearest lodges or *chiese* of Carbonari, and on the third day, he already, by their contributions, possessed twelve hun-

dred *lire*, which enabled him to make the necessary preparations for his voyage. This was the first and the last time, he says, that he taxed the secret societies with which he was connected; and as soon as he had received remittances from his family, he repaid the money, with which he had been supplied by them in that emergency.

New revolutionary commotions were on the eve of breaking out in Piedmont; and the fugitive profited by them. Under the protection of the *Sublimi Maestri Perfetti*, he traversed a country, which was then filled with *gens d'armes*. With a black wig, mustachios of the same color, and an olive-colored complexion, he assumed, with great success, the appearance of a deserter. When he met with soldiers, he pretended that he was seeking an enlistment in a Piedmontese regiment. Many an honest warrior of that country, approving of his desertion from the Imperial banners, supplied him with food, and drank to his success. Making his way by stealth under the cover of night, and passing the day concealed under the roof of some confederate, he at length arrived at Genoa. Here he flattered himself that he had reached the termination of his toils; but the ships bound for any of the harbors of France or Spain, were too closely observed, to leave him any hope of escaping by sea. There was the same vigilance, and consequently the same danger for him, at Leghorn, and he was therefore compelled to return almost to the point from which he had started, and to seek a refuge in Switzerland. His former disguises could not be safely assumed again, and he chose, therefore, that of a Capuchin friar. He wandered barefoot, and in safety, till he reached Vercelli, where he found, in the house of a *Countess*, several political associates, who had been his fellow prisoners at Turin. The spirit which then prevailed among the inhabitants of Vercelli, occasioned greater vigilance on the part of the police; and on the second day after his arrival in that city, the counter-police of the revolutionary party communicated the intelligence, that their antagonists had some suspicion of the new inmate of the Countess' palace. But the *Sublimi Maestri Perfetti* again saved him; and under a new disguise, that of a priest's attendant, he reached Intra, where the conspirators were so numerous, that he stood in no necessity of assuming any disguise.

Here ends the personal narrative of the author's adventures in the dungeons of Chamberry, Turin, and Milan, and during

his flight from the fortress of the last capital. Twenty pages, which make the conclusion of the book, contain the most singular medley of impious, blasphemous, mystical, dishonest speculations, that can cross a mind bewildered by the basest principles, or originate in a heart thoroughly corrupted.

ART. V.—*A condensed Geography and History of the Western States, or the Mississippi Valley.* By TIMOTHY FLINT, Author of 'Recollections of the last Ten Years in the Mississippi Valley.' In Two Volumes. 8vo. Cincinnati. E. H. Flint. 1828.

IF the merit of a writer is to be measured by the good which his books are calculated to effect, Mr Flint is one of the most deserving authors in the department of belles lettres, that America has produced. He has done more than almost any other individual, to bring the distant sections of the country acquainted with each other. If he did not open the gates of the mountains to the reading world, he has tempted its inhabitants to pass through them, far more frequently than they had ever done before. Of his former work, the 'Recollections of the last Ten Years in the Mississippi Valley,' an account has already been submitted to the readers of this journal. The value of that work has *extorted* commendations from persons not willing to yield them with a good grace. Mr Ward, the late British Chargé d'Affaires at Mexico, makes the following reference to it; 'Should any of my readers wish for information respecting the mode, in which the western settlements [in the United States] have been conducted, and the extraordinary manner in which they have thriven, I can refer them to Flint's "Journal of a Ten Years' Residence in the Valley of the Mississippi," which, although written in a most uncouth style, is both an interesting and instructive work.' Mr Ward has here incorrectly given the title of Mr Flint's work, although he uses the common marks of quotation. Inasmuch as he undertakes to censure the book, in respect to manner, we think he ought to begin his censure by calling it by the right name. A 'most uncouth style' is a vague reproach. It ought to import a remarkably odd, strange, and unusual manner. These are not